

Q&A from the Community Meeting
October 28, 2009
Niles Blvd Improvement Project (PWC8666)



Why are we narrowing the street? Won't this make it less safe?

Most people have probably observed that wider streets tend to encourage motorists to speed, whereas narrower streets tend to slow traffic down. The combination of a narrower street and traffic calming devices (see [bulb-outs](#) and [speed tables](#) below) is expected produce a significant reduction in traffic speed thereby enhancing safety. These features are also expected to make Niles Boulevard a more pedestrian friendly street as opposed to a street designed solely for vehicles.

What will happen to the sidewalks?

New sidewalks will be installed in front of all properties within the project area. Properties that currently have no sidewalks will have new sidewalks and properties that already have sidewalks will receive an upgrade. To comply with current standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all sidewalks will be five feet in width, which is one foot wider than the existing sidewalk.

Will there be a planter?

On the south blocks only between the nursery property to D Street and between E Street and F Street, the project will install a planter area next to the sidewalks. These planters will be available for the homeowner to landscape. The project will place bark mulch in the planter areas to prevent soil erosion. Irrigation sleeves below the sidewalk will provide residents with easy access to install irrigation systems without damaging the sidewalk. Property owners are encouraged to plant only what they can maintain and choose a form of landscaping that complements the community character.

Will bike lanes be included in the project?

There are no exclusive bicycle lanes currently planned for this project. Cyclists will not be restricted from riding their bicycles on Niles Boulevard, but they will have to share the road with motorists.

The standard bicycle lane requires a 5-foot width, which cannot be accommodated in the current design due to the space needed for vehicular traffic, on-street parking, and pedestrian access. Streets that do have bicycle lanes in lieu of parking are typically used in only commercial or industrial zoned areas. A stand alone dedicated bicycle lane would eliminate on-street parking.

Can the overhead lines be relocated underground?

Relocating overhead utilities underground is a lengthy process that requires coordination with utility companies, securing of "Rule 20" funding, and the upgrading of utility connections to each

individual home. Current projects undergoing this process have had to wait several additional years before actual work in the street could begin.

Since the original goal of this project is to rehabilitate the street pavement and given that this project is partially funded by redevelopment funds (which are continually at risk of being taken away), the City has decided that it is better to leave the poles where they are and design the project around them.

What are bulb-outs and speed-tables? Why don't we install a round-about?

Bulb-outs are curbs transitions that occur near intersections to narrow the width of the street. They are designed to slow vehicular traffic as they enter an intersection and reduce the distance a pedestrian has to travel in order to safely cross a street. There are existing bulb-outs on Niles Boulevard in the downtown area.

Speed-tables achieve a similar effect on traffic speed as speed bumps. They are a trapezoidal-shaped structure with a wide flat area on top and gently sloped ramps on both sides. The speed tables will be placed at the intersections and will be wide enough to allow pedestrians to walk on top of them as they cross the street. Based on studies of similar devices, a speed reduction of 5 to 10 mph can be expected.



Example of a speed table in front of a San Ramon School



Roundabouts and traffic circles are circular traffic calming structures that are placed in the center of the intersection. They can be effective in reducing traffic speed, but the City chose not to pursue this option since it does not accommodate pedestrian traffic as well as the bulb-out and speed table combination. Roundabouts also need more space and would require additional front yard property to be acquired at street intersections.

Is it possible to have a wider driveway than the one being proposed?

Driveway requests will be considered on a case by case basis. You may email the project staff with your specific requests (the earlier the better). In general, driveways have the following widths:

1. 14 feet wide maximum for properties with a single car garage

2. 20 feet wide maximum for properties with a double car garage

The existing design of front yard pavements and the location of property lines also affect how wide driveways can be.

Can stop signs be installed at intersections to slow down traffic?

There are a few reasons why additional stop signs are not being considered for Niles Boulevard:

1. Based on past studies by the City of Fremont, the existing traffic patterns at the intersection of Hillview/Niles and D/Niles do not warrant stop signs.
2. The primary purpose of a stop sign is to allow for vehicular traffic from a minor street to turn onto the major street; not to slow down traffic along the major street.
3. During peak travel hours, stacking at stop signs will restrict residents from backing out of their driveway
4. Automobiles and trucks tend to produce more exhaust and noise in front of homes where stop signs are located
5. Stop signs may actually result in more congestion during peak travel hours

How will the project affect my fence and sprinklers?

Private Property: Sprinklers that conflict with the new sidewalks will be relocated as a part of the project. The same is true for any fence relocations. If sprinklers are damaged during construction, the project will make the necessary repairs. Residents are encouraged to report any damages as soon as possible to ensure a timely repair.

Public Property: Landscaping and associated irrigation that have encroached into the City rights of way and conflict with the proposed improvements will be removed during the demolition work for the new sidewalk. Property owners will be given the opportunity to salvage the improvements prior to the demolition work.

Are there any plans for 2nd Street?

At the present time, there is no planned City project to reconstruct 2nd Street. The City's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan has not budgeted any funds for work on this street. The City's Maintenance Division will continue to repair potholes on 2nd Street until funding is available to reconstruct the street.

Will any special considerations be made since the project is located in the Niles District?

The City of Fremont recognizes the unique character and the historic significance of the Niles community. The project staff does keep these community interests in mind while applying generally accepted engineering practices and technical standards to the street design.